

REMARKS

Receipt is acknowledged of the Office Action of January 15, 2004. Claims 1-11 are currently pending in the application, of which Claims 1-7 have been allowed and Claims 8-11 have been rejected in the Office Action. Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for this early indication of the allowable subject matter. Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner with respect to the rejected Claims and request reconsideration of the rejection, as explained in more detail below.

Claim 8 was rejected by the Examiner under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,540,504 ("Cordova et al."). According to the Examiner, Cordova et al. discloses "all claimed subject matter." Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner and direct his attention to the specification and figures of the '504 Patent.

As shown in Fig. 3 of the Cordova reference, the disclosed bearing assembly includes a journal bearing 1 formed by an external sleeve 6 having an internal bushing 7 press or shrink fit mounted therein. (See column 2, lines 26-28). For lubricant supply within the bearing, an internal lubricant reservoir in the form of an internal circumferential channel 11 is defined in the inner surface 12 of the outer sleeve 6 or optionally on the external surface 13 of the bushing 7.

As shown in Fig. 3, the outer diameter of the outer sleeve 6 is exposed to the outside environment and not lubricated, while its inner diameter and the outer and inner diameters of the bushing 7 are sealed within the bearing and are lubricated. Therefore, Applicants believe that the "bearing sleeve" recited in the Applicants' Claim 8 is equivalent to the outer sleeve 6 of the Cordova reference and not the bushing 7. The internal circumferential channel 11 is formed on the inner surface 12 of the outer sleeve 6 or on the outer surface 13 of the bushing 7. Therefore, this reference does not teach an annular groove located on an outer diameter of the bearing

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sleeve. Additionally, in accordance with Claim 8, the recited groove can be partially filled with the lubricant. Cordova, however, teaches the groove 11 being completely filled with the lubricant.

Based on the above, Applicants believe that the limitation of independent Claim 8, reciting "at least one annular groove located on an outer diameter of said bearing sleeve, said outer diameter of the bearing sleeve being exposed to an outside environment and being lubricant-free," is not met by the cited '504 Patent. Claim 8 is believed to be patentable over the prior art of record.

Dependent Claims 9-11, are rejected over the same Cordova et al. reference. Applicants respectfully submit that dependent Claims 9-11 are believed to define patentable subject matter in view of their dependency upon allowable Claim 8 and, further, on their own merits.

The Examiner is urged to telephone Applicant's undersigned counsel at the number noted below if it will advance the prosecution of this application, or with any suggestion to resolve any condition that would impede allowance. In the event that any extension of time is required, Applicant petitions for that extension of time required to make this response timely. Kindly charge any additional fee, or credit any surplus, to Deposit Account No. 50-0675, Order No. 057517-44.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: November 17, 2004

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